# *My Mother Goose's Tales*

By
***Charles Perrault.***

A new translation by
Laurent Paul Sueur.

*My Mother Goose's Tales:*
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by Laurent Sueur

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# *Table of contents.*

**Little Red Riding Hood.**

**Little Thumb.**

**The sleeping beauty.**

**Cinderella or the little fur slipper.**

**Master Cat or the booted cat.**

**Riquet with the tuft.**

**Donkeyskin.**

**The fairies.**

**Bluebeard.**

# Little Red Riding Hood.

A long time ago, lived a small country girl who was the prettiest child ever seen. Her mother was very fond of her and her grandmother even more. This good woman had a little red riding hood designed for her; it fitted her perfectly, which was why people had nicknamed her *Little Red Riding Hood*.

One day, her mother, having made small cakes, said to her: “go to your grandmother’s house in order to see how she feels, because some people informed me that she is sick; bring her a cake and this little pot of butter”.

Little Red Riding Hood left at once for her grandmother’s house, who lived in another village. In a forest, she met a malicious wolf who wanted to eat her, but he did not dare to do so, since there were some woodcutters not far away. He asked her where she was going. The poor child, who did not know it is dangerous to stop in order to listen to a wolf, said to him: “I am going to my grandmother’s house; I am bringing her a little cake, along with a small pot of butter that my mother has prepared for her”.

-“Does she live very far?”, asked the wolf.

-“Oh, yes”, answered Little Red Riding Hood; “it is after the mill you can see there, over there, near the first house of the village”.

-“Well”, said the wolf, “I want to go and see her too; I am going this way, here; go that way, over there; we will see who will be the first to arrive”.

The wolf started to run, as fast as he could, along the shortest path. As for the girl, she followed the longest; she even had fun and picked hazelnuts, ran after the butterflies and made bouquets with the little flowers she found.

The wolf reached the grandmother’s house in two shakes of a lamb’s tail. He knocked at the door: “knock, knock”.

-“Who is there”?

-“Your granddaughter Little Red Riding Hood”, replied the wolf, mimicking her voice; “I am bringing you a small cake and a little pot of butter prepared by my mother”.

The good grandmother, who was in bed because she was indisposed, cried: “pull the peg and the latch will fall”.

The wolf pulled the peg and the door opened. He jumped on the good woman and ate her at once: he had not eaten anything in three days! Then, he closed the door and got into the grandmother’s bed. He waited for Little Red Riding Hood, who, some time later, knocked at the door: “knock, knock”.

-“Who is there”?

Little Red Riding Hood heard the big voice of the wolf and was afraid at first. However, she thought that her grandmother had a cold. So she answered:

-“it is your granddaughter Little Red Riding Hood; I am bringing you a small cake and a little pot of butter prepared by my mother”.

The wolf lowered his voice and said:

-“pull the peg and the latch will fall”.

Little Red Riding Hood pulled the peg and the door opened. While she was walking through the door, the wolf was hiding under the blanket. He said to her:

-“put the small cake and the little pot of butter on the bred chest, then come and lie down next to me”.

Little Red Riding Hood undressed and got into the bed. She was surprised to see how her grandmother looked in her nightdress. She asked her:

-“granny, why are your arms so long”?

-“Because I want to hug you better, dear”.

-“Granny, why are your legs so long”?

-“Because I want to run faster, dear”.

-“Granny, why are your ears so big”?

-“Because I want to hear better, dear”.

-“Granny, why are your eyes so big”?

-“Because I want to see better, dear”.

-“Granny, why are your teeth so big”?

-“Because I want to devour you”!

Saying these words, the bad wolf jumped on Little Red Riding Hood and ate her.

**The moral of the story.**

We realize that children, especially young ladies who are pretty, kind, and well-endowed, should never listen to all kinds of people. No wonder the wolf eats so many girls. I say “the wolf” because all wolves do not belong to the same species. Some are well-mannered, quiet, peaceful, friendly, and charming and keep making flattering remarks. They follow girls to their houses and bedrooms. Unfortunately, everybody knows that these charming wolves are the most dangerous ones.

## Little Thumb.

Once upon a time there was a woodcutter and his wife, who had seven children; all of them were boys. The eldest was only ten and the youngest seven. They had had these children within a short period of time, which is surprising. It has to be said that his wife was a bit hasty and used to give birth to twins each time.

They were really poor and their children were a financial burden because none of them could earn a living. The youngest was frail and not really talkative, which upset them a lot, for they believed that he was stupid, although he was intelligent. He was very short; when he was born, he was not taller than a thumb, which was why he had been christened "Little Thumb". This poor child was a scapegoat in the household: he was never taken seriously! However, he was more intelligent and better informed than all his brothers: if he did not use to speak a lot, he used to listen a lot!

There came a very bad year. The famine was so great that these poor people were forced to abandon their children. One night, while the children were sleeping and the woodcutter was seated next to the fireplace and his wife, he said to her, with a heavy heart:

-"you realize that we cannot feed our children any longer; since I do not want to see them starve to

death in front of me, I have decided to leave them in the forest tomorrow; it will be easy because, when they have fun tying firewood up, we will run away discreetly".

-"Ah!", cried the woman, "would you dare to abandon your own children"?

Her husband tried to explain that they were poor, but she did not want to acknowledge the truth; she was poor, but she was also their mother. However, having considered how hard it would be to see her children starve to death, she agreed and went to bed crying.

Little Thumb heard every word that had been uttered. Lying in bed, he had realized that they talked earnestly. So, he had got up quietly in order to hide under his father's stool. This way, he was able to hear them without being seen. He went to bed again and was unable to sleep for the rest of the night because he was thinking of what he had to do. He got up early in the morning and went to the river side, where he filled his pockets with small white stones. Then he went back home. They all exited the house, but Little Thumb did not reveal anything to his brothers. They went to a forest that was so thick that people could not see one another at a distance of ten paces. The woodcutter started to cut wood as his children bundled sticks up. The father and the mother saw that they were busy. So, they went away slowly and then ran away, following a circuitous route.

When these children realized that they were alone, they began to cry and shout as loud as they could. Little Thumb let them cry, for he knew how to go back home: when they were walking, he had dropped, along the road, the small white stones he had in his pockets. So, he said to them:

-“brothers, don’t be afraid: our father and mother left us here, but I will bring you home; follow me!”.

They did so: he brought them home, taking the path which they had formerly taken. At first, they did not dare to enter the house, but they all approached the front door in order to listen to what their father and mother were saying.

As soon as the woodcutter and his wife arrived home, the lord of the manor, whom they did not expect to pay them, sent them the ten pounds he had owed them for a long time. This brought them back to life, for they were starving. The woodcutter sent his wife immediately to the butcher's shop. Since they had not eaten anything for a long time, she bought three times as much meat as two people would eat for dinner. When they were full, the woman said:

-“oh, where are our poor children now? They would certainly like to eat what we have left here. William, it was you who wanted to leave them in the forest. I told you that we would regret it. What are they doing now in this forest? Oh, my gosh, they may

have been eaten by wolves! You are so cruel: you abandoned your own children"!

The woodcutter was upset because she repeated more than twenty times that "he would regret" and that "she had said so"! He threatened to beat her if she did not shut up. The woodcutter was not less upset than his wife, but she was getting on his nerves. His attitude of mind, which was shared by many people, compelled him to like women when they are right and to dislike the tiresome ones who are always right. The woman was crying:

-"oh, where are my children now, my poor children"?

She said this once so loudly that the children were able to ear it through the door. Hence, they cried together:

-"here we are, here we are".

She rushed to open the door, and, hugging them, she said:

-"I am happy to see you again, my dear children! You are tired, you must be very hungry; and you, Peter, you are really dirty; come here so that I may wash you".

Peter was her eldest son; she loved him more than the others because his hair was as carroty as hers.

They seated themselves at the table and ate. Their appetite pleased their father and mother. Speaking almost all together, they told their parents how frightened they were when they were in the

forest. These good people were glad to see all their children with them again; this happiness lasted until the ten pounds were spent. When the money was all gone, they were hopeless again and agreed to abandon them for a second time. They did not want to fail; so, they decided to lead them at a much greater distance than before. They were not discreet enough about this issue: Little Thumb heard them again. He decided to save his brothers and himself in the same way as before. However, he got up early in order to pick up small stones, but he did not complete his task, since he found the front door locked up. He did not know what to do, but the woodcutter's wife had given each of them a piece of bread for their breakfast: he thought that, instead of stones, he could throw little pieces of bread along the path they would take. So, he placed it in his pocket.

Their father and mother brought them in the thickest and most obscure part of the forest. After they had arrived, they took a byway and left them there. Little Thumb did not mind because he believed that he could easily find his way home again by means of his bread, which he had scattered along the road. But he was very much surprised when he was unable to find any piece of bread: the birds had come and eaten everything.

What a pity! The more they were lost, the more they were going into the remote areas of the forest. When night fell, the wind started to blow hard, which frightened them very much. They believed that these

noises were the howls of the wolves that were coming to eat them. They hardly dared to speak or turn their heads. Then it started coming down in buckets: they were soaked to the bone. Their feet slipped at every step they took; they fell into the mud and were thus really dirty. They felt helpless.

Little Thumb climbed to the top of a tree so that he might see if he could discover anything: he looked in all directions and saw a small light (a candle maybe) that was far away, beyond the forest. He came down, and, when he was on the ground, he was unable to see it anymore, which annoyed him. However, he and his brother having walked for some time in the direction of the light, he saw it again as he left the wood.

At last, they arrived at the house where the candle was. They were quite nervous since they often lost sight of it, which happened each time they reached a dell. They knocked at the door, and a good woman came and opened it. She asked them what they wanted. Little Thumb told her that they were poor children who had been left in the forest and who begged her to spend the night in her house. Noticing that they were all so dirty, the woman began to weep and then said to them:

-“My dear children, you don’t know where you are! As a matter of fact, it is the house of an ogre who eats little children”!

Little Thumb and his brothers were quivering with fear; he answered:

-“Madam, what can we do? It is clear that the wolves that live in the forest will eat us tonight if you refuse to put us up. That’s why we’d rather be eaten by your husband. Perhaps he will take pity on us, especially if you implore his mercy”.

The ogre's wife, who believed that she could hide them until the next morning, let them come in and led them to a very good fireplace, where a whole sheep on a spit was cooking in order to be served at the ogre's dinner and where they could warm themselves up.

As they were starting to feel warmer, they heard someone rap three or four times on the door: it was the ogre who was coming back. She immediately hid them under the bed and went to open the door. The ogre first asked whether the dinner was ready and whether the bottle of wine was on the table. Then he seated himself at the table. The sheep was almost raw, but he preferred it this way. He sniffed from side to side, saying the air smelled like fresh flesh. His wife said:

-“what you smell must be the calf I have just prepared”.

Looking angrily at his wife, the ogre replied:

-“once more, I am telling you that I smell fresh flesh; there is something that I don’t understand here”.

As he uttered these words, he rose from the table and headed towards the bed. He said:

-“ah, wicked women, I know that you want to fool me! I should eat you too. Luckily, you are but an old animal. These prey will be eaten by three ogres who are acquaintances of mine and who must pay me a visit in a day or two”.

One by one he pulled them from underneath the bed. The poor children dropped to their knees and begged forgiveness, but they were dealing with the most cruel ogre in the world, who, far from having pity on them, was already devouring them with his eyes. He told his wife that they would be a delicious dish if she served them with one of her tasty sauces.

He took a big knife and, coming closer to these poor children, he sharpened it on a whetstone which he held in his left hand. He had already taken hold of one of them, when his wife said to him:

-“why do you want to do this now? Won’t you have enough time tomorrow”?

The ogre replied:

-“shut up, they will be more miserable”.

His wife said:

-“but you have so much meat already; here there are a calf, two sheep, and half a pig”.

-“You are right”, said the ogre, “force-feed them so that they may not lose weight, and put them to bed”.

The good woman was really happy; she offered them a cornucopia of mouthwatering delicacies, but they were so afraid that they could not eat anything. As for the ogre, he started to drink again. He was very

happy to have good food to give to his friends. He drank a dozen glasses more than usual, which caused a mild headache and moved him to go to bed.

The ogre had seven daughters, who were still very young. All these young ogresses had a beautiful skin because they used to eat fresh flesh like their father, but they had small round grey eyes, hooked noses, wide mouths, and very long sharp teeth spaced far apart. They were not extremely wicked yet, but they exhibited promising personality traits: they already used to bite little children in order to suck their blood.

They had been put to bed early. They were all in the same big bed and were wearing a golden crown. In this room, there was another bed of the same size. The ogre's wife put the seven little boys in it. Then she lay down on hers, next to her husband.

Little Thumb had noticed that the ogre's daughters were wearing golden crowns. He feared that the ogre would regret having changed his mind about not slaughtering them the night before. So, in the middle of the night, he woke up, took his nightcap and his brothers', and set them silently on the heads of the seven ogresses after having taken off their golden crowns. He placed them on his head and his brothers' so that the ogre might take them for his daughters and his daughters for the little boys he wanted to slaughter. Everything went as expected: the ogre woke up around midnight and regretted having postponed what he might have done the night before

until the next morning. Hence, he jumped from his bed and grasped his big knife saying:

-“let’s see how our little rascals are; let’s kill them right away”.

Then, groping in the dark, he went upstairs and entered his daughters’ bedroom. He approached the bed where the little boys were. They were all sleeping except Little Thumb. The ogre touched the children’s heads. When Little Thumb felt the ogre’s hand, his anxiety increased. The ogre touched the golden crowns and said:

-“ah, really, I was about to make a terrible mistake! I realize that I drank too much last night”.

Then he went to the bed where the girls were; he touched the boys' little nightcaps and said:

-“ah, the boys are here; let’s act”!

As he uttered these words, he cut the throats of his seven daughters like a shot. Delighted with the result, he went to bed again and nestled against his wife. When Little Thumb heard the ogre snore, he immediately woke his brothers, ordered them to put on their clothes quickly, and told them to follow him. They went downstairs silently and crossed the garden. They jumped over the wall. They ran almost all night, quivering with fear and without knowing which way to go.

When he awoke, the ogre said to his wife:

-“go upstairs and *prepare* the little rascals who came here last night”.

The ogress was much surprised by her husband's kindness, and she did not understand what he really meant by preparing them. She believed that he had ordered her to clothe them. So, she went upstairs and was astonished to see her seven daughters lying in a pool of blood with their heads chopped off.

At first, she fainted, for almost all women behave in this manner in such a situation. The ogre feared that his wife would delay what he had ordered. So, he went upstairs in order to help her. He was as amazed as his wife when he saw this horrible scene. He cried:

-"ah, what did I do? These criminals will pay for this immediately".

Then he threw a bucket of water in his wife's face and she regained consciousness. He said to her:

-"give me my seven-league boots right now so that I may go and catch them".

He went out. He ran all over the place and, at last, reached the road where the poor children were, not very far away from their father's house. They beheld the ogre, who went from mountain to mountain and strode over rivers as if they were rivulets. Little Thumb, who noticed that there was a small cave near them, told his brothers to hide in it. He followed them, watching the ogre all the time. The ogre was very tired because of this long, useless journey (these seven-league boots exhaust the user). He wanted to have some rest. He happened to seat

himself on the rocky hill where these little boys had hidden.

Since he was very tired, after a while, he fell asleep and began to snore so loudly that the poor children were as afraid of him as when he was holding his big knife in order to slaughter them. Little Thumb was not as frightened as his brothers; he told them to rush to their house: the ogre was sleeping deeply, which was a relief. They followed his advice and got home quickly.

Little Thumb came up to the ogre. He took off his boots gently and put them on right away. The boots were oversized and loose, but since they were enchanted, they could get bigger or smaller according to the legs of the person who wore them. So, he put them on; they fitted like a glove. He went immediately to the ogre's house, where he saw his wife crying next to her murdered daughters. Little Thumb said:

-“your husband is in extreme danger because he was kidnapped by a gang of thieves who will kill him if he does not give them all his gold and silver. They were about to slay him when he saw me and asked me to come here so that I might describe his situation and tell you that you must give me everything he has, without keeping anything. If you don’t obey this order, they will kill him. Since this is an urgent request, he asked me to wear his magic boots, which enabled me to be more rapid and to show that I am not a liar”.

The good woman, who was terrified, gave him immediately all she had, for this ogre was a very good

husband, even though he used to eat little children. Little Thumb brought the ogre's money to his father's house, where everyone welcomed him.

There are many people who do not agree on the last issue and pretend that Little Thumb never stole money from the ogre and that the latter would take off his seven-league boots, for he used them only to run after the little children. These people say that they know this for sure, all the more because they drank and ate at the woodcutter's house. They declare that, once Little Thumb had put on the ogre's boots, he went to the King’s palace, for he knew that His Majesty worried about a certain army, which was two hundred leagues away, and a certain battle. They say that he met the King in order to tell him that, if he so wished, he would go there and bring news about this issue by the end of the day. The King replied that he would give him a lot of money if he achieved that. In the evening, Little Thumb came back, along with the news. Since this first expedition enabled him to become famous, he earned a lot of money; bear in mind that he was paid substantial sums of money to transmit the King’s orders to the army. Many ladies also gave him whatever he wanted to inform them of their lovers’ situations: it was really lucrative! A few married women would ask him to bring letters to their husbands, but they were so mean that he did not want to tell us how much money he made through this means.

He was a messenger for a while and earned a lot of money. Then he went back to his father's house, where everyone was extremely happy to see him. He was generous to all the members of the family. He bought newly-created offices for his father and brothers and thus enabled them to get a job and have friends at court.

**The moral of the story.**

Everybody is happy to beget many children who are handsome, athletic, very tall and attractive. When one of them is weak or does not speak a lot, people hate and mock him. They even steal his money. However, this infant will sometimes be the pride and joy of the family.

# The sleeping beauty.

Once upon a time there lived a king and a queen who were very upset because they did not have children; they were so upset that no word can express what they felt. They visited all the holy wells in the world, asked Good to help them, made pilgrimages, and donated a lot of money, but nothing worked.

However, one day the queen got pregnant and gave birth to a baby girl. There was a beautiful christening. They asked all the fairies they could find in the country (they found seven of them) to become the princess's godmothers. Each of them bestowed a talent upon her, as fairies usually did in those days. Consequently, the princess was blessed with all the imaginable qualities.

After the christening, all the guests returned to the king's palace, where a great banquet was held in order to honor the fairies. The table was awesome: before the fairies, there was a solid gold box that contained a spoon, a fork, and a knife, all made of pure gold and adorned with diamonds and rubies. As they sat at the table, a very old fairy came in. She had not been invited because people had not seen her for over fifty years. Everybody knew that she lived in a tower, but was she enchanted or dead? The king asked the butler to give her a spoon, a fork and a knife. However, the latter could not give her a gold box, for only seven had been made. The old fairy believed that people

hated her. She murmured a few threats. One of the young fairies, who was next to her, heard her. She thought that she was going to bestow a disability upon the young princess. So, she left the table and hid herself behind the drapes in order to be able to speak after her and thus mitigate the trouble the old fairy might cause the princess.

However, the fairies began to bestow talents upon the princess. The youngest turned her into the most beautiful person in the world; the next enabled her to be as intelligent as an angel; the third made her achieve what she would intend to achieve; the fourth enabled her to dance very well, the fifth to sing like a nightingale, and the sixth to play all kinds of musical instruments with utmost perfection. The old fairy's turn came next. Her head shaking more with resentment than old age, she said that the Princess's hand would be pierced by a spindle, which would kill her.

This horrible gift made all the guests tremble. Everybody cried. Then the young fairy came out from behind the hangings and declared:

-"don't worry, your majesties, your daughter will not die. It is self-evident that I haven't got enough power to undo entirely what the old fairy has done. So, the princess will pierce her hand with a spindle, but, instead of dying, she will only fall into a deep sleep, which will last a hundred years. Then the son of a king will come and wake her up".

The King, in order to avoid the misfortune foretold by the old fairy, promulgated a law stating that everybody was forbidden, under pain of death, from spinning with a spindle or from having one at home.

After fifteen or sixteen years, the King and Queen went to one of their country houses. One day, the young Princess ran in the castle and went up from one room to another; she reached the top of a donjon. In a small room, in the attic, there was a good old woman, who was spinning with a distaff. This good woman had never heard of the King's proclamation about spindles.

-“What are you doing here, good old woman?”, asked the princess.

-“I am spinning, my pretty child”, answered the old woman, who did not know who she was.

-“Ha! What a pretty thing”, exclaimed the princess, “how do you do this? Give it to me so that I may see whether I can handle that”.

As soon as she grasped the spindle, because she was nervous and somewhat thoughtless since the fairies had decided so, she pierced her hand and fainted away. The good old woman was embarrassed; she shouted for help: many people rushed to help her. They put water on her face, untied her clothes, tapped on her hands, and rubbed her temples with cologne, but she did not regain consciousness. The King, who had come because of the noise, remembered the prediction of the fairies. He realized that it was

inevitable since the fairies had said so. He had the Princess put in the most beautiful apartment of the palace, on a bed embroidered with gold and silver patterns. She looked like an angel, for she was really beautiful. The syncope had not faded the vivid colors of her skin; her cheeks were rosy and her lips resembled coral. Although her eyes were closed, one could hear her breathe softly, which proved that she was not dead. The king ordered the courtiers to let her sleep until she awakened naturally.

The good fairy who had saved her life by compelling her to sleep a hundred years was in the kingdom of Mataquin, twelve thousand leagues away, when this accident took place. Nevertheless, she was instantly informed by a dwarf who was wearing boots of seven leagues, namely boots with which people could walk seven leagues in one stride. The fairy jumped into a chariot of fire pulled by dragons and arrived one hour later.

The King helped her to get out of the chariot. She approved everything he had done. Since she was provident, she thought that, when the Princess awakened, she might be embarrassed, for she would be alone in this old castle. Hence, with her wand, she touched everybody in this castle, except the king and the queen, namely governesses, ladies-in-waiting, chambermaids, page boys, lackeys, gentlemen, officers, butlers, cooks, pot stirrers, scullions, guards and doorkeepers. She also touched all the horses which were in the stables, the grooms, the big

watchdogs and Little Pouffe, the princess's little dog, which was next to her, on the bed. Once touched, they all fell asleep. They would awake at the same time as their mistress so that they might serve her when necessary. The partridges and pheasants on spits, in the fireplace, fell asleep; so did the fire. All this was done in two shakes of a lamb's tail: fairies act quickly.

The king and the queen kissed their dear child, who was sleeping. They left the castle and promulgated a decree prohibiting people from coming near it. This was not necessary because, in a quarter of an hour's time, the trees, brambles and bushes that were in the park grew, which prevented human beings and beasts from entering the castle. Nothing could be seen but the top of the towers, and one had to be far away to be able to behold them. Everybody knew that all this was the fairy's enchantment, which was aimed at protecting the sleeping princess from troublemakers.

A hundred years later, the son of the reigning king, who belonged to a different family, went hunting there. He asked what were the towers he saw in the middle of a thick forest. Everyone answered according to what they had heard about them. Some said that it was an old castle haunted by spirits and others that all the sorcerers of the country rendezvoused there. Most people believed that an ogre lived there and that he led all the children he could catch to that place so that he might eat them at his leisure: nobody was able

to follow him since he was the only one who was able to pass through the forest. The prince was confused, but an old peasant said to him:

-“your royal highness, more than fifty years ago, I heard someone say to my father that there was a princess in this castle, the most beautiful one in the world; she had to sleep there for a hundred years; she would be awoken by the son of a king, for whom she was reserved”.

Hearing these words, the young prince got excited. He unquestionably believed that he could put an end to such a beautiful adventure. Love and pride compelled him to try to get more information. He headed for the forest and, all of a sudden, all the big trees, bushes and brambles moved apart so that he might pass. He walked in the direction of the castle, which stood at the end of a long avenue. He soon walked along this avenue. He was a little surprised to see that none of his people was able to follow him, for the trees resumed their positions once he had passed through them. He kept on walking: a young prince in love is always courageous. He entered a spacious forecourt where everything frightened him. The silence was terrifying. The image of death was everywhere. There was nothing but stretched bodies of humans and animals: they seemed to be dead. He knew, thanks to the crimson faces and the red spots on the noses of the doorkeepers, that they were only asleep, all the more so because there were traces of

wine at the bottom of their goblets, which proved that they had fallen asleep while they were drinking.

He crossed a courtyard paved with marble, went upstairs, and entered a room where the guards were lined up, their muskets on their shoulders, and snoring as loud as they could. He crossed several rooms full of gentlemen and ladies, all asleep, some standing and others sitting. He entered a room covered with gold and beheld, on a bed where all the curtains were opened, the most beautiful thing he had ever seen: a princess, who appeared to be fifteen or sixteen and whose beauty was somewhat luminous and divine. He was trembling. Mesmerized, he approached and kneeled down next to her.

Since the enchantment had come to an end, the Princess awoke. She looked at him tenderly, which was an attitude a first meeting should have never allowed.

-“Is it you, my prince?”, she said to him, “I have been waiting for you for a very long time”.

The prince, charmed by these words and especially by the way they had been uttered, did not know how to show that he was happy and grateful to her. He assured her that he loved her more than he loved himself. What he said was confused, but it pleased her very much: little eloquence, much love! He was more embarrassed than she. It is not surprising: she had had time to think about what she was going to say to him. Though there are no historical records, it appears that, during her very

long sleep, the good fairy had enabled her to have pleasant dreams. Actually, they talked four hours together but did not say half of what they had to say.

In the meanwhile, all the palace awoke. Everyone thought of going back to work, but, since they were not in love, they were starving. Like the others, the lady-in-waiting was in a hurry. She grew impatient and said loudly that dinner was served. The prince helped the princess to her feet. Her outfit was magnificent, but he did not dare to tell her that her gown and her collar were out of fashion. However, she looked pretty.

They entered a room whose walls were covered with mirrors. They had dinner there and were served by the princess's officers. The violinists and oboists played old tunes, excellent ones, even though they had not been played for a century. After dinner, without wasting time, the Grand Almoner of France married them in the chapel of the castle. Then the lady-in-waiting drew the bed curtains. They did not sleep a lot, for the princess was not tired.

The next morning, the prince left her in order to go back to the city where his father worried about him. The prince told him that he had lost his way while he was hunting in the forest and that he had slept in the cabin of a charcoal burner, who had offered him brown bread and cheese. His father the king, who was kind to everybody, believed him, whereas his mother did not. Since he went hunting almost every day and had always perfect excuses

when he spent three or four nights away from home, she believed that he was having an affair. Actually, he lived for more than two years with the princess and had two children with her. The first child was a girl; she was named Dawn. The second child was a boy; he was named Day because he seemed to be even prettier than his sister.

In order to force his son to disclose his secret, the Queen told him several times that in life people had to enjoy themselves, but he never let the cat out of the bag. He feared her as much as he loved her, for she was an ogress, and the King had married her for her money. The courtiers circulated rumors that she exhibited cannibalistic behavior and that she could hardly refrain from attacking children when some of them passed by. Consequently, the prince hushed the whole affair up. However, when the king died, which happened two years later, he became king and disclosed that he was married. Hence, he paraded to the castle of his wife and brought her to his. She and her two children entered the capital. The inhabitants greeted them with thunderous applause.

Some time later the king declared war on Emperor Cantalabutte, his neighbor. He asked his mother the queen to govern the kingdom in his absence and to take care of his wife and children. He had to fight at the front for the whole summer. As soon as he departed, the Queen Mother sent her daughter-in-law, and her children, to a country house in the woods in order to be able to satisfy her horrible

craving more easily. Some days later, she went there and, one evening, said to her butler:

-“I want to eat Dawn for my dinner tomorrow”.

-“Ah! Madam”, exclaimed the butler.

-“**I want it so**”, replied the Queen (she uttered these words like an ogress who wants to eat fresh flesh), “and I want to eat her with Robert sauce”.

The poor man, who realized that one must never deceive an ogress, grasped his big knife, climbed the stairs and entered Dawn's bedroom. The four-year-old girl approached him, jumping and laughing; she threw her arms round his neck and asked for some candy. He began to cry. Then he let go of the big knife. He went into the backyard and killed a lamb. He served it with such a good sauce that his mistress assured him that she had never eaten anything that delicious. He had also taken Dawn to his house, which stood at the end of the courtyard, so that his wife might hide her.

Eight days later, the evil queen said to the butler:

-“I want to eat Day for my dinner”.

He did not answer. He was determined to fool her as he had done before. He went upstairs in order to take Day away and noticed that he was holding a small foil. As a matter of fact, he was training with a big monkey, although he was but three years old. He led him to his house, where his wife hid him with Dawn. Instead of Day, he served a kid. The meat was tender, and the ogress said that it was really delicious.

Everything went well, but, one evening, this wicked queen said to the butler:

-“I want to eat the queen with the same sauce as one served with her children”.

This time, the poor butler believed that he would not be able to deceive her. The young Queen was a little over twenty years of age, without mentioning the hundred years she had been asleep: her skin was somewhat rough, though beautiful and white. Was it possible to find, in the backyard, an animal whose flesh was that stringy? So, in order to save his life, he decided to slaughter the queen. He went upstairs, rose the hand that was holding a knife and entered her bedroom. Since he did not want to surprise her, he respectfully told her that the order had been given by the queen mother.

-“Do your duty”, she said to him as she stretched out her neck, “do what you have been told to do. Then I will go and see my children, my poor children I have loved so much”.

In fact, she believed that they were dead, for they had been taken away without her knowledge.

-“No, no, Madam”, answered the poor butler, who was deeply moved, "you will not die, and you will see your children again, but this will take place in my house, in which I hid them. Once again I will fool the Queen by serving her a young hind instead of you”.

He took her immediately to his house, where he let her hug her children and cry with them. Then he prepared a hind for the queen’s dinner, which she ate

as greedily as if it had been the young queen. She was delighted with her cruelty. She would soon tell the king, when he returned, that enraged wolves had devoured his wife the queen and her two children.

One evening, as she was, as usual, prowling in the courtyards and stables of the palace in order to smell any fresh meat, she heard, in a room on the ground floor, Day crying: his mother the queen was going to whip him because he had been naughty. She also heard Dawn begging her mother to forgive her brother. The ogress recognized the voice of the queen and her children. She was furious that she had been fooled. With a horrible voice which made everybody tremble, she ordered her people to place, the next morning, a large tub in the middle of the courtyard. It would be filled with toads, vipers and grass snakes in order to throw the queen, her children, the butler, his wife and his housemaid into it. Their hands had to be tied behind them. Hence, they were brought in front of the tub. The executioners were just going to throw them into it when the king, who was early, entered the courtyard on horseback. He had come as rapidly as possible. Shocked, he asked what was the meaning of this scene, but no one dared to answer him. The ogress, upset to see what she saw, threw herself, head first, into the tub and was instantly devoured by the ugly creatures she had ordered to put into it. The king was really annoyed because she was his mother, but he soon found solace in his pretty wife and children.

## The moral of the story

It is normal to wait for quite some time to find a husband who is rich, well proportioned, pleasant and friendly. However, nowadays, there are no more women who wait for him for a century, sleeping peacefully. Besides, this fable seems to indicate that, most of the time, when people delay getting married, theses marriages are happy ones: patience can be rewarding. However, women stubbornly want to get married, which moves me to say that I have neither the strength nor the courage to sermonize.

# Cinderella
# or
# the little fur slipper.

Once upon a time there was a gentleman who remarried the proudest and haughtiest woman ever seen. She had already two daughters, who shared the same attitude of mind and were her spitting image. As for the husband, he had a daughter, a young lady who was good and sweet: qualities she had inherited from her mother, who was the best person in the world. Immediately after the wedding, the stepmother showed her bad temper. She could not bear the good qualities of this young girl because they made her own daughters appear more detestable than they actually were. So, she used to order her to carry out the most unpleasant tasks: she washed the dishes, cleaned the stairs and tidied up the bedrooms of the mistress and her daughters. Her bedroom was in the attic and she slept on a straw mattress, whereas her sisters' bedrooms had wooden floors, fashionable beds and large mirrors in which they could see themselves from head to toe. The poor girl bore all those wrongs patiently. She did not dare to complain, for if she had done so, her father would have scolded her: his wife led him around by the nose.

Once she had finished working, she would head for the fireplace, where she would sit on the ashes. Hence, the household had nicknamed her ashy girl.

The youngest, who was not as vicious as the eldest, called her Cinderella. However, the raggedly dressed Cinderella was a hundred times prettier than her sisters, though they were always dressed to the nines.

The son of the king organized a ball, to which he invited all the persons of quality. The two damsels were also invited, for, in that country, they were regarded as important personages. They rejoiced at this invitation. It took them some time to choose the clothes and hairstyle that suited them best. This was a new tiring task for Cinderella, for she was the one who ironed her sisters' clothes and folded their lace cuffs. They kept talking about the outfits they would don. The eldest said: “I will wear my red velvet suit, which is covered with English lace”. The youngest said: “I will put on an ordinary gown, but it will be covered with a gold-flowered coat, and a breathtaking diamond belt will hold it in place”. They fetched the best hairdresser so that she might adjust their double-rowed wimples, and they also purchased high-quality beauty spots. They called to Cinderella in order to ask for her opinion, for she had good taste. So she offered them good advice and told them that she could do their hear, which they accepted.

As she was doing their hair, they said to her:

-“Cinderella, would you like to go to the ball”?

-“Ah, you are making fun of me! Anyway, it is not my cup of tea”.

-“You are right: people would laugh if they saw an ashy girl go to a ball”.

Someone else would have tousled their hair, but she was a good girl, which is why she did a great job. They were so happy that they fasted for two days. Cinderella broke more than twelve laces when she tried to lace up their corsets so that they might look slimmer. They spent ours looking in the mirror.

At long last the eagerly awaited day came. They left the house, and Cinderella followed them with her eyes as long as she could. When she lost sight of them, she started crying. Her godmother, who saw her crying, asked her what was the matter.

-"I would like… , I would like…"

She did not finish her sentence, since she could not refrain from crying. Her godmother, who was a fairy, said to her:

-"you would like to go to the ball, wouldn't you"?

-"Yes, unfortunately", answered Cinderella, sighing.

Her godmother asked:

-"will you be a good girl? If you behave well, I will grant your wish".

She led her into her bedroom and said to her:

-"go into the garden and bring me a pumpkin".

Cinderella went to pick the finest she could get and brought it to her godmother, but she did not know how this pumpkin could enable her to go to the ball. Her godmother removed the inside, leaving nothing but the rind. She touched it with her wand, and the pumpkin turned into a magnificent gilded coach.

Then she went to look at the mousetrap, in which she found six mice that were alive. She asked Cinderella to lift the door: each time a mouse exited, she touched it with her wand in order to turn it into a handsome horse. Now she had a team of six horses, whose colour was an exquisite medium grey with darker round marks.

Since she did not know which animal to take in order to make a coachman, Cinderella said to her:

- "I will go and see if there is a rat in the rattrap. If there is one, we will turn it into a coachman".

-"You are right", replied her godmother, "go and look".

Cinderella brought her the rattrap; there were three big rats in it. The fairy chose the one with the largest beard. she touched it with her wand, and it turned into a big coachman, who had one of the most beautiful moustaches ever seen.

Then she said to her:

-"go into the garden: you will find six lizards behind the watering can; bring them to me".

No sooner had she brought the lizards than her godmother turned them into six footmen. Dressed in fancy uniforms, they immediately sat on the backseat of the coach. They fastened their seat belts as if they had done nothing else their whole lives.

Then the fairy said to Cinderella:

-"well, now we can go to the ball; do you like it"?

-"Yes, but will I go there dressed in rags"?

Her godmother touched her with her wand, and her clothes turned into a gown covered with gold and silver patterns and sparkling gems. Then she handed her a pair of ravishing fur slippers. Dressed in that fashion, she got into her coach, but her godmother insisted that she should not stay until after midnight. If she stayed at the ball one moment longer, her coach would be a pumpkin again, her horses mice, her footmen lizards, her coachman a rat, and her clothes what they were before. She promised that she would leave the ball before midnight. Then she went away; she was very happy.

The son of the King, who was told that a great princess, whom nobody knew, had arrived, ran to her in order to greet her. Hence, he helped her to get off the coach and led her into the hall, where all the guests were. A hush fell over the crowd: they stopped dancing and the violinists ceased playing, for everybody was mesmerized by this stranger's beauty. Nothing was heard but a distant murmur that said: "Ha, how pretty she is"! The king himself, who was an old codger, could not help looking at her. He told the queen discreetly "that it had been a long time since he had seen a beautiful, pleasant person like her". All the ladies looked at her clothes and hairstyle closely in order to have some designed, the following day, if they found beautiful fabrics and skilled workers.

The son of the king took her to the best place, and then he danced with her. She danced so gracefully that people admired her even more. Many delicacies

were served, but the young prince ate nothing, for he kept gazing at her. She went and sat down by her sisters and did her best to be friendly to them. For instance, she told them that the prince had given her oranges and lemons, which surprised them very much, for they did not know her!

While Cinderella was chatting, she heard the clock strike eleven forty-five: she immediately took her leave of the company, and went away as fast as she could. Back home, she went and saw her godmother. After having thanked her, she told her that she wanted to go to the next ball, for the son of the king had asked her to come. As she was busy telling her godmother what had happened during the ball, her two sisters knocked at the door. Cinderella answered the door.

-"It has taken you a long time to come back", she said to them, yawning, rubbing her eyes, and stretching herself as if she had just woken up. However, she had not slept during the evening and the beginning of the night.

-"If you had attended the ball", said one of her sisters, "you wouldn't have watched the clock: there came the prettiest princess, the prettiest ever seen. She was friendly and gave us oranges and lemons".

Cinderella was really happy. She asked them the name of that princess, but they told her that nobody knew her and that the son of the king was very upset and would strive hard to discover her identity. Cinderella smiled and said to them:

-“was she really pretty? Oh Lord, how lucky you are! Could I see her? Ah! Miss Javotte, lend me your yellow suit, the one you wear every day”.

-“Honestly”, said Miss Javotte, “I think that I would be crazy to lend my dress to a dirty ashy girl like you”.

Cinderella expected a refusal and was glad to receive it, for she would have been embarrassed if her sister had accepted to lend her her dress.

The next day the two sisters were at the ball; so was Cinderella, but her dress was even more magnificent. The son of the king stood close to her; he kept paying her compliments. The young lady enjoyed herself and thus forgot what her godmother had told her. When she heard the first stroke of midnight, she did not even believe that eleven o’clock had gone by. She rose from her chair and fled as nimble as a deer. The prince followed her but could not catch her up. She lost one of her fur slippers; the prince picked it up carefully. Cinderella got home without her coach and footmen. She was out of breath and dressed in rags. All this prestige but the other little slipper had vanished into thin air. At the gate of the palace, one asked the guards whether they had seen a princess pass by. They answered that they had seen nobody but a shabby young lady who looked like a country girl.

When her two sisters returned from the ball, Cinderella asked them again if they had enjoyed it and if the pretty lady was present. They told her that she

was but added that she went away when the clock struck twelve. She had acted so hastily that she had dropped one of her beauteous little fur slippers. The son of the king had picked it up; he had done nothing but look at it during the rest of the ball: he was, most certainly, very much in love with the beautiful person who owned this fur slipper.

What they said was true because, a few days later, the prince proclaimed that he would marry the lady who would be able to put on the slipper. The princesses put it on first; then it was duchesses' turn and that of the other female courtiers, but their efforts were in vain. They brought it to the two sisters, who tried their best to put on the slipper, but they failed. Cinderella, who saw all this and recognized her slipper, said to them laughing:

-"let's see if it fits me"!

Her sisters burst into laughter and began to make fun of her. The gentleman who was holding the slipper looked at Cinderella carefully. He found her very pretty and said that it was fair to let her put it on, all the more so because the prince had ordered him to let every girl slip into it. He asked Cinderella to sit down. He moved the slipper near her small foot and noticed that it was easy to put it on. In fact, it fitted like a glove. The two sisters were really surprised and even more than surprised when Cinderella took the other slipper from her pocket and put it on. Then her godmother appeared. She touched Cinderella's rags

with her wand; they turned into a magnificent dress that was more beautiful than a starry sky.

Her two sisters realized that she was the beautiful lady whom they had seen at the ball. They threw themselves at her feet in order to apologize for having mistreat her. Cinderella helped them to get back on their feet, embraced them and declared that she forgave them and wanted them to be friendly to everybody. She was taken to the castle of the young prince dressed as she was: he found her more charming than ever, and, a few days later, he married her. Cinderella, who was as kind as she was pretty, invited her two sisters to stay in the palace and introduced them to two important courtiers, whom they married right away.

**The moral of the story.**

There are very few beautiful women. People never grow tired of admiring them. However, what we call kindness is priceless and more useful. That is what the godmother taught to Cinderella. She even turned her into a queen. This is the moral that can be deduced from this tale.

Young ladies, these qualities are much more important than having one's hair styled. In order to charm a man, one must be kind, kindness being the most valuable quality fairies bestow upon girls. When one possesses it, one can achieve anything; when one does not, one always fails.

**The second moral of the story.**

It is, of course, always advantageous to be born witty, courageous, wealthy, reasonable, etcetera. Nonetheless, if you want to be successful, it is not enough to possess these qualities: your godfathers or godmothers must tell people that you possess them.

## Master Cat or the booted cat.

Once upon a time there was a miller who bequeathed his three children only a mill, a donkey and a cat. It was easy to divide the inheritance among them: neither the solicitor nor the attorney was summoned. It was clear that this meagre patrimony would not last long. The eldest got the mill, the second the donkey, and the youngest the cat. The latter was disappointed to get such a worthless share. “My brothers”, he said, “will be able to earn their living and make enough money by putting their shares together; for my part, when I have eaten my cat and fashioned a muff from its skin, I will die of hunger”. The cat, who heard all this without uttering a word, ended up declaring composedly and seriously:

-“do not worry, master; just give me a bag and a pair of custom-made boots so that I may go into the bushes. You will soon realize that the share you got is not that meagre”.

Even though the cat’s master did not believe it, he had often seen it play a great many cunning tricks on rats and mice in order to catch them. For instance, it used to hang upside down and hide itself in the flour and play dead. Consequently, he believed that the cat would help him.

Once the cat had received what it had asked for, it put on its boots, placed its bag around its neck and held the strings in its forepaws. Then it went to a

place where there were many rabbits. It put bran and sow thistles in its bag; it lay down on the ground, played dead and waited for some naïve young rabbit, which was supposed to go into the bag in order to eat what it had put inside.

No sooner had it lain down on the ground than a thoughtless young rabbit jumped into its bag. Master Cat immediately pulled the strings, caught it and killed it mercilessly. Feeling proud of its prey, it went to the king's residence and asked to see His Majesty. It was showed to the King's apartment. It bowed low to him and said:

-"Your Majesty, here is a wild rabbit which the Marquess of Carabas – the cat had decided to rechristen its master this way – ordered me to offer you on his behalf".

-"Tell your master", answered the King, "that I thank him and that I appreciate it".

On another occasion, it went and hid itself in a wheat field. Once again, its bag was open, and when two partridges went into it, the cat pulled the strings and caught them. It went and gave them to the king, as it had done previously. The king thanked it for the two partridges and gave it some money. For two or three months and from time to time, the cat gave some of his master's game to the king. One day it heard that the king had to take a stroll along the river and that he would be accompanied by his daughter, who was the most beautiful princess in the world. So it said to its master:

-“If you follow my advice, you will get rich. Just go and bathe in the river: I will show you the spot. Then leave it to me”.

The Marquess of Carabas did what his cat advised him to do, although he did not know whether he would derive any benefit from it. While he was bathing in the river, the king passed by, and the cat began to cry as loud as it could:

-“help! Help! The Marquess of Carabas is drowning”.

This noise moved the King to stick his head out of the window. He recognized the cat that had brought him game so often. He commanded his guards to rescue the Marquess of Carabas. While they were pulling the poor Marquess out of the river, the cat approached the coach and told the king that, while its master was bathing, some thieves stole his clothes, though it had cried “thieves” as loud as it could. Actually, this naughty cat had hidden them under a big stone. The King immediately commanded his wardrobe officers to fetch one of his best suits and give it to the Marquess of Carabas. The king paid him a great many compliments. The beautiful clothes he had just put on flattered him. Besides, he was handsome and fit. The daughter of the King found him attractive. No sooner had the Marquess of Carabas cast two or three respectful and somewhat tender glances at her than she fell madly in love with him. The king insisted that he should get into his coach in order to go for a ride. The cat rejoiced that everything

was going according to plan. So it took the initiative. Since it met some peasants, who were harvesting wheat, it said to them:

-“kind people who are harvesting, if you do not tell the King that this meadow belongs to the Marquess of Carabas, you will be chopped up and turned into mincemeat”.

As predicted, the king asked the harvesters to whom that meadow belonged.

-“To the Marquess of Carabas”, they chanted in unison, for the cat’s threat frightened them.

- “What a nice inheritance”, said the king to the Marquess of Carabas.

-“Your Majesty”, responded the Marquess, “this meadow yields an abundance of wheat every year”.

Master Cat, which was still going ahead, met some harvesters. It said to them:

-“kind people who are harvesting, if you do not tell the King that all this wheat belongs to the Marquis of Carabas, you will be chopped up and turned into mincemeat”.

A moment later, the king passed by. He wanted to know to whom all the wheat he saw belonged. “To the Marquess of Carabas”, replied the harvesters, and the king congratulated the Marquess again.

The cat, which was going ahead, said the same things to the people it met. Consequently, the king was astonished at the Marquess of Carabas’s wealth. At last, Master Cat reached a beautiful castle owned by an ogre, the richest ever seen, for all the lands the

king had crossed belonged to this individual. The cat, which had taken care to get information about this ogre and his talents, asked to see him. It said that, being so close to his castle, it had to pay its respects to him. The ogre received it as civilly as an ogre could do and asked it to take a seat.

-"People assured me", said the cat, "that you can turn into all sorts of animals; you can, for example, turn into a lion or an elephant".

-"This is true", retorted the ogre, "and in order to prove that, you are going to see me turn into a lion".

The cat was so frightened to see a lion in front of it that it rapidly climbed the wall to take refuge in the gutter, which was not an easy task, for its boots prevented it from walking on roof tiles. Some time later, the cat saw that the ogre had recovered his shape. So it climbed down the wall and declared that it had been very much frightened.

-"People also assured me", added the cat, "but it is hard to believe, that you can assume the shape of the smallest animals. For instance, you can turn into a rat or a mouse. Personally I think this is impossible".

-"Impossible?", repeated the ogre, "look at this", and he turned into a mouse, which began to run on the floor.

No sooner had the cat beheld it than it jumped on it and ate it. Meanwhile, as the king was passing by the beautiful castle of the ogre, he saw it and wanted to visit it. The cat, who heard the noise of the coach

passing across the drawbridge, rushed out and said to the king:

-“It is an honor to guide His Majesty through the castle of the Marquess of Carabas”.

-“Lord Carabas”, cried the king, “does this castle also belong to you? There is nothing more beautiful than this courtyard and all the buildings which surround it; let us go inside, if you please”.

The Marquis took the princess by the hand and followed the king, who climbed the stairs first. They entered a spacious hall, where they found a magnificent collation which the ogre had prepared for his friends, who had to visit him on that day but who did not dare to come because they knew that the king was present. His Majesty realized that the Marquess was really rich. He was also impressed by his qualities; so was his daughter, who was madly in love with him. So, after having drunk five or six glasses of wine, he said to him:

-“Lord Carabas, you will have to decide whether you want to become my son-in-law”.

The Marquess bowed lowed to him several times and accepted this privilege. Hence, on the very same day, he married the princess. The cat became a member of the nobility and stopped running after mice, except when he wanted to have fun.

**The moral of the story.**

It is advantageous to receive a large inheritance that has been passed down from generation to generation. However, work and savoir-faire are usually more useful for young people than acquired wealth.

**The second moral of the story.**

When a princess falls in love with a miller in the blink of an eye, one must realize that beautiful clothes, a pretty face and youth are qualities that inspire tenderness most of the time.

## Riquet with the tuft.

Once upon a time there was a queen who gave birth to a boy who was so ugly and weak that people wondered whether he looked like a human being or not. A fairy, who was present when he was born, assured them that he would be lovable since he would be intelligent. She even added that, thanks to the talent she had bestowed upon him, he would be able to turn the stupid girl he would love into a genius. All this relaxed the poor Queen, who lamented that she was the mother of such an ugly kid. However, when this child began to speak, he said lots of pretty things. He behaved so intelligently that people were fascinated by him. I have forgotten to say that, when he was born, there was a little tuft of hair on his head, which moved them to call him Riquet with the tuft, for Riquet was the name of this family.

Seven or eight years later, the queen of a neighboring kingdom gave birth to two girls. The first-born child was prettier than the day: the Queen was so happy that people feared that this feeling would make her ill. The fairy who had witnessed the birth of Riquet with the tuft was present. In order to temper the Queen's happiness, she told her that this little princess would be as stupid as she was pretty. This annoyed the Queen very much, but a while later she was even more shocked: she gave birth to a girl who was extremely ugly.

-“Do not worry, Madam”, said the fairy, “for your daughter will be rewarded with intelligence: she will be so intelligent that people will hardly notice that she is not pretty”.

-“Fair enough”, replied the Queen; “but isn’t it possible to give some intelligence to the eldest, who is so pretty”?

-“Madam, as to intelligence, I cannot do anything for her”, answered the fairy, “but I can deal with her beauty. Since I want to please you, I will enable her to turn any person of her choice into a handsome one”.

As these Princesses grew up, their qualities also increased. People did not stop talking about the beauty of the eldest and the intelligence of the youngest. Admittedly, as time passed, their defects increased considerably. The youngest became very ugly and the eldest really stupid. Actually, the latter either did not answer the question or said something very silly. Moreover, she was so clumsy that she could neither place four porcelain trinkets on a mantelpiece without breaking one of them nor drink a glass of water without spilling half of it on her clothes. Although beauty is a great advantage to young people, the youngest was almost always more popular than she. Consequently, at first, people would come up to the pretty princess in order to see and admire her, then they would turn to the intelligent one so that they might hear her speak intelligently on many

subjects. In less than a quarter of an hour, the eldest was alone while the youngest was surrounded by many people. Even though the eldest was really stupid, she noticed that. She would have liked to swap her sister all her beauty for half her intelligence. The Queen, who was a wise woman, could not help reproaching her for being stupid, which almost drove this poor princess to despair.

One day, as she was in a forest in order to complain about her misfortune, she beheld an ugly little man, who was elegantly dressed. It was the young Prince Riquet with the tuft. He had fallen in love with her, for he had seen her face on the pictures sold here and there. Hence, he had left the kingdom of his father in order to meet her. Happy to find her alone, he greeted her in the most respectful way. He praised her and noticed that she was very sad; he said to her:

-“Madam, I don’t understand how a good-looking person like you can be as sad as you seem to be. I can boast of having seen lots of pretty ladies, but I am willing to admit that I have never met one as beauteous as you”.

-“If you say so”, answered the Princess, who did not say anything else.

-“Beauty”, added Riquet with the tuft, “is such a great advantage that it eclipses all the rest. When one is pretty, one is indestructible”.

-“I’d rather be”, said the Princess, “intelligent and as ugly as you than be as pretty and stupid as I”.

-“Madam, nothing shows more that we are intelligent than to believe that we are not. As a matter of fact, the more people are intelligent, the more they believe that they are not”.

-“I didn’t know that”, said the Princess, “but I know that I am really stupid, which is why I am so sad”.

-“Madam, if this is the only reason for your distress, I can easily put an end to it”.

-“And how will you do that?”, inquired the Princess.

-“I can, Madam," said Riquet with the tuft, “give as much intelligence as possible to the person I will like best. Since you are this person, Madam, it is up to you to decide whether you want to become intelligent or not. If this is the case, you will have to marry me”.

The Princess was so confused that she did not utter a word.

-“I realize”, replied Riquet with the tuft, “that this proposal upsets you, and I am not surprised, but I give you a whole year to think about it”.

The Princess was so stupid and, at the same time, so eager to become intelligent that she believed that the end of the year would never come. Consequently, she accepted this proposal. No sooner had she promised Riquet with the tuft to marry him on the very same day, in twelve months’ time, than her personality changed. Now she was able to express easily, intelligently and clearly what she wanted to say. Hence, she began to converse intelligently with Riquet

with the tuft. She was so smart that Riquet with the tuft believed that he had given her more intelligence than what he had reserved for himself.

When she returned to the palace, the court were surprised at this sudden extraordinary change, for before she kept talking nonsense, whereas now she only spoke intelligently about numerous issues. However, if the court were delighted, her younger sister was annoyed, for, since she was not more intelligent than she anymore, she looked like an ugly female monkey now. The King would take her advice, and, sometimes, he even met his ministers in her apartment. The news spread, and all the young princes who lived in the neighboring kingdoms tried to charm her. Almost all of them proposed to her, but she found that none of them was intelligent enough. So, she listened to all of them, but she did not choose anyone.

However, a powerful, rich, witty and handsome prince came, which compelled her to be more open-minded about his proposal. Her father noticed that and told her that he allowed her to choose a husband and reveal her intentions. The more intelligent one is, the more difficult it is to make a decision. Consequently, she thanked her father and asked him to give her more time to think about it.

She chanced to stroll through the wood where she had met Riquet with the tuft in order to consider what she had to do. While she was walking and cogitating, she heard a noise, which came from the

ground. It resembled that made by busy people moving about. She pricked up her hears and heard people say: “bring me that cooking pot… give me that cauldron… put some wood on the fire”. All of a sudden, the ground opened; she beheld a place that looked like a big kitchen full of cooks, scullions, and all sorts of servants indispensable to the organization of a sumptuous feast. Twenty or thirty cooks exited from the bowels of the earth in order to position themselves around a very long table located in an alley. With their larding needles in their hands and sprigs of amaranth behind their ears, they began to work to the beat of a melodious song.

Surprised at this spectacle, the Princess asked them for whom they worked.

-“Madam”, answered the most flamboyant one, “we work for Prince Riquet with the tuft, who will marry tomorrow”.

The Princess, who was more surprised than ever, remembered that, twelve months ago, on the same day, she had promised to marry Riquet with the tuft. She came down to earth. She had completely forgotten about that because she was silly when she had made this promise: the intelligence she had received from the Prince had made her forget all the stupid things she had said. She continued walking, but, once she had taken thirty steps forward, she met Riquet with the tuft. He was magnificently dressed, like a prince who was about to get married.

-“Madam”, he said, “as you can see, I kept my word, and I guess that you are going to keep yours and make me the happiest man alive by marrying me”.

-“Truth to tell”, answered the Princess, “I haven’t made a decision, and I fear that I don’t follow the logic of your argument”.

-“Frankly, Madam, you astonish me”, retorted Riquet with the tuft.

-“This comes as no surprise”, said the Princess. “Of course, if you were a brutish ignoramus, a witless man, I would be very embarrassed. You would say that a princess must keep her word and marry the man to whom she is engaged. However, since the person with whom I am talking is the most intelligent man in the world, I fell certain that he will listen to reason. You know that, when I was a fool, I could not resolve to marry you. Hence, because of the intelligence you gave me, which renders me more indecisive than ever, do you really believe that I am going to come to the decision which I was unable to make in the past? If you really wanted to marry me, you should not have deprived me of my stupidity in order to enlighten me”.

-“Madam, if a stupid man”, replied Riquet with the tuft, “is entitled, as you say, to reproach you for breaking your promise, why shouldn’t I behave in the same manner, since my happiness is at stake? Is it fair that intelligent people are in a worse situation than those who are stupid? Can a woman who is so intelligent and wanted to be that intelligent agree on

that? Please, let's get to the point. Is there anything in me you don't like save my ugliness? Are you dissatisfied with my birth, intelligence, mood, or manners"?

-"Not at all", answered the Princess; "I like everything you have just mentioned".

-"Consequently", added Riquet with the tuft, "I will soon be happy since you can turn me into the most lovable man of all".

-"Then how is it possible?", asked the Princess.

-"It will come true", said Riquet with the tuft, "if you love me enough and want it to happen. Madam, so that you may believe me, you must know that the fairy who, when I was born, enabled me turn the stupid girl I would love into a genius also enabled you to turn the man you would love into a real knockout".

-"Consequently", said the Princess, "I wish with all my heart that you could become the handsomest prince in the world. That's what I want".

No sooner had the Princess uttered these words than she began to regard Riquet with the tuft as the handsomest and most lovable man in the world. Some people declared that the spells cast by the fairy had nothing to do with this and that love alone caused the metamorphosis. They added that the Princess had noticed that her suitor was resolute, discreet and endowed with lots of qualities, which made he forget that he was ugly and disabled. She considered that his hump was a characteristic displayed by a man who was arching his back and that his limp was charming.

His crossed eyes seemed to twinkle, which denoted an excess of love. At last, his big red nose was martial and heroic.

However, the Princess assured him that she would marry him if her father agreed. The King learned that his daughter had a high opinion of Riquet with the tuft, whom he regarded as a wise, intelligent Prince, which was why he agreed to his request. They got married the next morning according to plan, as Riquet with the tuft had foreseen.

**The moral of the story.**

What we infer from this tale is truer than it seems: everything we love is intelligent and pretty.

**The second moral of the story.**

When nature creates an object that is beautiful and which no art will be able to fashion, all qualities are useless, for nothing but love can uncover the invisible characteristic that will make people fall in love.

# Donkeyskin.

To the Marchioness of L…
Some narrow-minded people
Whose foreheads are wrinkled
Bear, appreciate and value
Pomp and sublimeness.
I daresay sometimes
Very intelligent persons
Enjoy watching a puppet show
Without feeling ashamed.
At times and in some places,
Seriousness and solemnity
Are less important than a pleasant tale.
It comes as no surprise that
The most reasonable mind,
Which does not often sleep,
When it is ingeniously rocked
By tales that deal with ogres and fairies,
Enjoys dozing.

I don't mind
Being criticized
Because I waste my time.
Hence, in order to please you,
I am going to recount
The story of Donkeyskin

Once upon a time there was a
One-of-a-kind king,
The greatest on earth,
Who was kind in peacetime
And redoubtable in wartime.
His neighbors were afraid of him.
His country was quiet,
And thanks to his numerous victories,
Virtue and fine arts thrived.
His adorable wife,
his faithful companion,
Was very pretty and charming.
She was so laid-back that
He was a happy husband
Rather than a happy king.
This chaste, sweet, gentle
And pleasant marriage
Had brought forth a virtuous girl,
Which enabled him to
Bear the fact that
He did not have more children.

In his magnificent big castle,
Everything was sumptuous.
There were myriads of
Courtiers and servants.
In the stable, there were
Many different types
Of tall and small horses
Covered with beautiful caparisons

Stiffened with gold and embroideries.
However, one was mostly surprised
To behold a donkey that
Displayed its big ears
At the entrance to the palace,
In the most visible place.
This injustice might surprise you,
But when you discover
Its exceptional virtues,
You will realize that
This privilege was not that great.

Actually, nature had granted it
The ability to excrete
Old and new beautiful gold coins,
Which were picked from its blond litter
Every morning, when it awakened.

God, who sometimes is tired of
Making people happy
And who always adds
Misfortunes to what he gives,
Like the sun and the rain,
Allowed a serious disease
To affect the Queen
Unexpectedly.
They asked for help everywhere,
But neither the doctors who study Greek
Nor the charlatans who sell snake oil
Were able to stop the fire

Which the fever kept fanning.

Her last hour arrived.
She said to her husband:
“Before I die, I want you
To do something.
If you wished to remarry
After my death…”
-“Ah”, said the King,
“These precautions are incongruous
Since I am not willing to do that.
You don’t have to worry about it”.
-“I do believe you”, answered the Queen,
“For you love me madly,
But, in order to confirm my belief,
I want you to swear it.
However, if you meet a woman
Who will be prettier and wiser than I,
You will have to propose to her
And then to marry her”.
Since she believed in her qualities,
She believed that this oath, which
She had extorted from him,
Was a pledge not to remarry.
Hence, the tearful Sovereign
Swore all that the Queen wanted.
She died in his arms:
No husband had ever made
So much noise!
He wept night and day,

And people believed that
The sorrow he felt would not last long,
Since he cried over his late wife
Like a man in a hurry
Who wants to get rid of a problem.

They were right.
Some months later,
He wanted to choose another wife.
It was not easy,
since he did not want to break his word.
Consequently, the new wife
Had to be more attractive
Than the one
They had just buried.

Neither the Court,
Composed of myriads of beauties,
Nor the countryside,
Nor the town,
Nor the neighboring kingdoms
They visited were able
To provide them with a suitable bride.
The Princess, his daughter,
Was the fairest one of all.
She had qualities
Her mother did not have.
The King noticed that.
Consumed with love,
He was crazy enough to think that,

Because of her beauty,
He had to marry her.
He even found a casuist who declared that
His opinion was morally defensible.
However, the young Princess
Lamented this kind of love:
She kept crying.

Profoundly unhappy,
She went and saw her godmother.
She lived far away,
In a cave covered with coral
And mother-of-pearl.
She was a great fairy
Whose talent was unchallenged.
There is no need to describe
Old-time fairies,
For I feel certain that your nannies
Did so a long time ago.
She saw the Princess and said:
“I know what brings you here and
Why you are so sad.
Since I am here,
You needn’t worry:
Nothing can harm you
If you obey me.
Your father would like to marry you;
It would be a terrible mistake
To accept his crazy proposal,
But you can refuse it

Without contradicting him.

Tell him that if he wants to please you,
Before you yield to his love for you,
He will have to give you a dress
The colour of the weather.
In spite of all his power, his wealth,
And even the help from the sky,
He will never be able to fulfill your wish".

The terrified young Princess
Hurried to join
Her lovelorn father,
Who at once
Told the most famous tailors
To design immediately a dress
Whose colour was that of the weather.
If they did not do so, they would be hanged.

On the morning of the second day,
They brought the dress.
The most beautiful blue of the empyrean
When it is topped with golden clouds
Is not as blue as this one.
Happy and sad at the same time,
The princess knew neither what to say
Nor how to break her word.
-"Princess", murmured her godmother,
"Ask for a less ordinary outfit;
One that shines: a dress

Whose colour is that of the moon.
He will not be able to find one"!
No sooner had the Princess asked
For the dress
Than he said to his embroiderer:

"I want it to be more beautiful
Than the celestial body
That glitters at night.
I give you four days".

They obeyed the King and delivered
The sumptuous outfit on time.
In the skies,
Where the night has unfolded its sails,
The moon is less grandiose
Clad in its silvery negligee,
Even though the stars are eclipsed
By its brightness.

The Princess was blown away by
This magnificent dress;
She wanted to accept it,
But her godmother advised her to say
To the lovelorn Monarch:
"I would be happy if I had something
more brilliant: a dress
Whose colour is that of the sun".
The King, who loved her dearly,
Immediately called a stonecutter

And ordered him to use
A magnificent gold fabric
Covered with diamonds.
If the result was not good,
The King would torture and kill him!

He did not have to do that,
For the hard-working artisan
Brought the precious artefact
By the end of the week.
It was so beautiful and brilliant
That the blond lover of Clymene,
When he drives his golden chariot
In the firmament,
Is not that dazzling.

The Princess, confused by these presents,
Did not know what to say
To her father the king.
Her godmother took her
By the hand and whispered:
“You must not surrender.
Are these presents exceptional,
Considering that a donkey
Gives him gold coins every day?
Ask for the skin
Of this exceptional animal.
Since all his wealth comes from him,
He won’t give it to you,
Or I don’t understand anything!

This fairy was very knowledgeable,
But she did not know
That people who are madly in love
Disregard silver and gold.
Hence, the Princess received the skin
She had asked for.

This skin frightened her extraordinarily:
She was so unlucky!
Her godmother appeared and told her
That people who do good
Don't have to be afraid.
She added:
-"Let him believe that
You are going to marry him, but,
At the same time,
Alone and disguised,
You will go far away
In order to escape from
This inevitable forthcoming sin.

Here is a small chest
In which I will set all your clothes,
Your mirror, your tablecloth,
Your diamonds and your rubies.
I will also give you my wand.
When you grasp it, the chest will follow you.
Always hide it in the ground.
If you need to open your small chest,

Touch the earth with my wand,
And it will appear.

If you want to keep a low profile,
The skin of the donkey
Is a convenient cover.
Hide yourself under it:
It is so awful
That nobody will ever believe that
There is something beautiful inside".

Dressed like that,
The Princess left her godmother's cave
In the cool of the morning.
The Sovereign, who was arranging
The wedding ceremony,
Heard the sad news.
They moved heaven and earth to find her,
But they failed:
They could not discover
What had happened to her.

This caused a great commotion:
No wedding, no banquet,
No wedding cake,
And no Jordan almonds!
Most of the female courtiers were so Discouraged that
they did not eat anything.
The vicar was really sad, for
He ate late and

Did not get paid.

Meanwhile, the Princess kept on walking.
Her face was covered with dirt.
She asked for help
And tried to get a job,
But the less agreeable
And rudest people, when they beheld
So sad and dirty a girl,
Wanted neither to listen to her
Nor to put such a
Repellent creature up.

She went far away and reached a farm
Where the farmer's wife
Needed a dishwasher
Who could also wash the dishrags
And the hog trough.

They put her somewhere
At the back of the kitchen,
Where the male servants,
Insolent vermin,
Shoved, contradicted and teased her.
They played nasty tricks on her
And harassed her.
All their jokes and bons mots
Were directed towards her.

On Sundays, she was less busy.

In the morning, after having been
To the toilet, she used to
Lock herself up in her bedroom.
She would wash,
Open her small chest, lay a tablecloth
And set her little pots on it.
In front of her mirror, happy,
She would put on
The moon-colored dress,
Or the one that shined like the sun,
Or the other one
Which blue was incomparable.
She regretted that she could not
Spread the trains on the floor
Because her bedroom was too small.
She liked to realize that she was young,
That she had a fresh complexion, and that
She was more elegant than the others.
This small pleasure
Made her life bearable.

I have forgotten to say that,
In this big farm,
There was the chicken run
Of a wealthy, extravagant king.
In the ten courtyards,
There were lots of bantams,
Corncrakes, guinea fowl, cormorants,
Muscovy ducks, little bustards
And other strange birds.

When he returned from the hunt,
The son of the King used to go
To this lovely place
In order to get some rest
And drink cold water
With the courtiers.
The good-looking Cephalus himself
Was not as outstanding as he.
The Prince was imperious and warlike:
He could frighten
The proudest battalions.
Donkeyskin gazed
Longingly at him.
Thanks to this daring act, she realized
That beneath her rags and dirtiness
The heart of a princess
Was still beating.
She said:
-“He does not care about me,
But he is lovable and
Seems to be a good man.
His girlfriend is a very lucky woman.
If he gave me an ugly dress,
I would consider that I look more elegant Than when I wear these”.

One day, he went for a walk
And reached a shady alley,
Where he found

Donkeyskin's small house.
He chanced to look
Through the keyhole.
Since it was a holiday,
She was wearing priceless
Pieces of jewelry
And her beautiful dress
That shines like the sun,
The one made of gold fabric
Covered with big diamonds.
The Prince observed her.
He was so amazed
That he could hardly breathe.
Her clothes were beautiful,
But her pretty face,
The whiteness of her skin,
Her delicate features and her youth
Moved him even more.
Besides, her royal bearing
And her modesty
Indicated that she had a beautiful soul.
Hence, he fell in love.

Because of his passions,
He wanted to kick down
The door thrice.
Since he believed that
He had beheld a goddess,
He felt compelled to stop thrice.

Thoughtful, he went back to the palace
And kept on sighing.
He did not want to go to the ball,
Although it was Carnival Time.
He wanted neither to hunt
Nor to go to the theatre.
He lost his appetite.
Everything made him feel nauseous.
He was struck down
By a sad, deadly lack of energy.

He wanted to know
Who was the pretty girl
He had seen in the cabin
At the far end
Of a dreadful, shady alley.
They said to him:
-“It is not a pretty girl but
A creature they call Donkeyskin,
Since she always wears
The skin of a donkey.
She is the most effective antidote to love.
In other words,
Excluding the wolf,
She is the ugliest animal on earth”.

He did not believe what they said.
The love he felt
Was a stabbing pain.
His mother the Queen,

Who did not have other children,
Was anxious and kept crying.
She wanted to know
The nature of the disease:
He moaned, sighed, cried
And only said that he wanted a cake
Made by Donkeyskin.
His mother did not understand.
Someone said to her:
-“Madam, this Donkeyskin
Is a black mole which is
Uglier and dirtier
Than the dirtiest scullion”.
-“It doesn’t matter”, said the Queen;
“We must please him;
This is our only goal”.
His mother loved him so dearly
That he would have eaten gold
If he had wanted to do so.

Hence, Donkeyskin
Took some sifted flour,
Salt, and butter and fresh eggs.
Then she locked the door of her
Bedroom in order to make the cake.

First, she washed her hands, arms,
And face and grasped a silver corset,
Which she laced rapidly.
Appropriately dressed,

She started to make the cake.
People say that
One of her priceless rings
Fell from her finger because of
Her haste to make the cake.
Those who know the end of the story
Assure us that she slipped it there.
I agree with them, for
It is clear that
She knew that the Prince
Was behind the door,
Looking at her through the keyhole.
Women always notice this kind of detail,
For they keep glancing at people,
Which enables them to discover
Whether one spies on them or not.
Moreover, I assure you that
She knew that her young lover
Had received the ring.

No one had ever made
Such a tasty cake.
He found it so delicious that
He devoured it
And almost swallowed the ring.
When he saw the magnificent emerald
And the small gold circle
That enclosed her finger,
He burst with joy.
He set it immediately under his pillow.

His condition worsened:
He kept on losing weight.
The knowledgeable physicians
Unanimously declared that
He was lovesick.

Since matrimony,
In spite of its bad reputation,
Is an efficient drug,
They wanted to marry him to someone.
At first, he refused;
Then he said:
-“I will marry the woman
Who will be able to wear this ring”.
This strange request
Surprised the King and the Queen,
But he was so sick
That they did not dare to refuse.

Hence, regardless of people’s status,
They tried to find the girl whom the ring
Would turn into a princess:
All women came to the palace
In order to show their fingers.

It was believed that the ring was small.
Consequently, in order
To receive a warm welcome,
The charlatans said that
They could reduce

The size of fingers.
One of the ladies, on a whim,
Peeled her finger as if
It were a turnip.
Others cut it into small pieces,
Or squeezed it,
Or rubbed an ointment in,
But the skin fell away!
They strove hard
To put on the ring.

First, the young princesses arrived,
Then the duchesses
And the marchionesses.
But their delicate fingers
were already too big
And could not fit into the ring.
The countesses, baronesses
And dames
Displayed successively their hands
And repeatedly failed.

As for the pretty commoners
With their beautiful skinny digits,
They were sometimes
Close to putting on the ring,
Which kept rejecting all the fingers,
For they were either too small or too big.

They had to meet, at last,

The maidservants, hall girls,
Female cooks and poultry keepers -
In short, the small fry,
Whose dirty red paws
Were as eager to fit into the ring
As the aristocratic hands.
They saw many girls
With stubby fingers
That resembled cables
Which one intended to thread
Through the eye of a needle.

They believed that it was over,
For there was only one person left:
Donkeyskin, the kitchen maid.
People did not want to acknowledge
That God had designated her
As the future queen.
The Prince said:
-“Why not! Let her come here”.
They laughed and yelled:
-“How dare you let this
Dirty female monkey come here”?
However, they all looked surprised
When a small pinkish hand,
Which looked like an ivory object,
Emerged from the dirty skin,
And when she slid
Her small finger into
The stubborn ring.

They wanted to take her
To the apartment of
Her lord and master the King.
Nonetheless, they gave her time
To dress up.
Actually, the courtiers
Were about to make fun of her dress.
In order to reach the apartment,
She crossed the rooms
Where they had gathered.
Her sumptuous dress was unique.
Her blond hair, covered with diamond, was shining
like the sun.
Her sweet blue eyes,
Filled with royal pride,
Looked at them and beguiled them
Without hurting their feelings.
Her waist was so tiny
That two hands could encircle it.
So much beauty and heavenly grace
Eclipsed the elegant outfits
Of the ladies.

There was joy; there was noise.
The King was happy to have
A daughter-in-law who was so pretty.
The Queen was shocked.
The Prince, her dear lover,
Was ecstatic.

Hence, they organized the wedding.
The King invited all the monarchs
Of the neighboring countries.
Royally dressed,
They left their kingdoms
In order to attend this great event.
Some kings came from the East
Seated on big elephants.
The kings of North Africa,
Who were blacker and uglier
Than the latter,
Frightened the children.
A great many monarchs
Came from a great many countries.

However, the most magnificent of them all
Was the father of the Princess.
His love for her had changed:
Time had purified
His perverted soul.
The criminal desire had vanished,
And the remains
Of his unacceptable longing
Had turned into
Befitting fatherly love.
As soon as he saw her, he said:
-“My dear child, I thank God
For allowing me to see you again”.
He shed tears of joy and embraced her.

His wealth impressed everybody,
And the Prince was happy to learn that his
Future father-in-law was immensely rich.

At that moment, the godmother arrived
And recounted the whole story:
Donkeyskin appeared
Even more virtuous.

It is easy to realize that
The aim of this tale is
To enable children to acknowledge
That it is better to suffer
The worst punishment
Than to neglect one's duty.
Sometimes virtue is belittled,
But it is always rewarded.

It is clear that
The highest level of reason
Does not often
Protect people from unhealthy love
And its perverted passion, for
Rich men can seduce women
By means of expensive gifts.

Young creatures,
If they have beautiful clothes,
Don't need anything but
Fresh water and brown bread.

Under the sky,
All woman believe that they are
Beautiful and deserve to receive
The Apple of Discord,
Which belongs to the fairest one of all.

The tale of Donkeyskin is hard to believe,
But, as long as there are children,
Mothers and grandmothers,
It will be remembered.

# The fairies.

Once upon a time there was a widow who had two daughters. The eldest was the spitting image of her mother, which was why whoever looked at her saw the mother. They were both so unpleasant and proud that it was impossible to live with them. The youngest, who was as kind and sweet as her father, was also one of the most beautiful girls ever seen. Since people instinctively love their own image, this mother adored her eldest daughter and hated the youngest. She compelled the latter to eat in the kitchen and work a lot. Besides, twice a day, this poor child had to walk one mile, draw water from a fountain and bring a full jug home. One day, as she was standing in front of that fountain, a poor woman came up to her in order to ask for some water.

-"Of course, Madam", answered the pretty girl.

She rinsed the jug and drew some water from the best part of the spring. She held the pitcher so that she might drink easily. The good woman drank and said to her:

-"you are so pretty, good and trustworthy that I cannot help offering you something".

Actually, she was a fairy who had assumed the form of a poor countrywoman in order to check whether this pretty girl was that kind. The fairy continued:

-“From now on, each time you will speak, you will spit out either a flower or a jewel”.

When the pretty girl came home, her mother scolded her for staying too long at the fountain. The poor girl said:

-“mother, I apologize for being so late”.

While she was saying this, two roses, two pearls, and two big diamonds came out of her mouth. Her surprised mother said:

-“What is this? I think there are pearls and diamonds coming out of your mouth! How is it possible, child”? (This was the first time that she had called her “child”).

The poor child told her frankly what had happened to her, vomiting up an infinite number of diamonds. The mother said:

-“actually, I must send my child there. Come here Fanchon; look at what comes out of your sister's mouth when she speaks! Wouldn’t you be glad to have the same gift? You just have to go and draw water from the fountain, and when a poor woman asks you to let her drink, you will only have to do so”.

-“I going to the fountain?”, asked the brute, “you must be joking”!

-“I want you to go there”, said the mother, “and right now”.

She went there, but she did not stop grumbling. She brought the most beautiful silver bottle they possessed.

As soon as she arrived at the fountain, she saw a well-dressed lady emerging from the wood. She asked for some water. She was the fairy with whom her sister had conversed. However, she looked like a princess now because she wanted to see how dishonest this girl was. The arrogant brute said to her:

-“I have come here to give you some water. I have brought a silver bottle in order to achieve this purpose. Madam, you can drink from the bottle, if you wish”.

-“You are not very kind”, said the fairy calmly. “Since you are not friendly, from now on, each time you will speak, you will spit out either a snake or a toad”.

When her mother saw her, she cried:

-“What’s up, daughter”?

-“Well, mother”, answered the brute, spitting out two vipers and two toads.

-“O Lord!”, cried the mother. “What is this? Your sister must be responsible for that; I am going to punish her”.

She wanted to beat her, but the poor child scurried away so that she might hide in a nearby forest. The son of the King was returning from the hunt. He met her by accident and found her very pretty. He asked her what she was doing there alone and why she was crying. She replied:

-“alas, sir, my mother has kicked me out”!

The Prince, who saw five or six pearls and the same number of diamonds come out of her mouth,

asked her to explain what was going. She told him the whole story. The Prince fell in love with her. He felt certain that such a gift was worth more than the money all the other brides used to receive. So, he took her to the castle of his father and married her.

As for her sister, she was so disagreeable that her mother kicked her out. Nobody wanted to put the poor girl up. So, she died in a part of the forest.

**The moral of the story.**

Diamonds and money can influence people. However, compliments are more powerful and valuable.

**The second moral of the story.**

Kindness demands efforts and a little complaisance, but sooner or later it pays off, especially when people least expect it.

# Bluebeard.

Once upon a time there was a man who had beautiful houses, both in town and in the country, silverware, gold-plated tableware, pieces of furniture covered with embroidered fabric, and gilded coaches. Unfortunately, this man had a blue beard, which made him look so ugly and scary that all women and girls ran away from him.

One of his neighbors, who was a noblewoman, had two beauteous daughters. He wanted to marry one of them. Hence, she had to choose which one she would allow to marry him. Neither of them was interested in his proposal, for his blue beard sickened them. Besides, they were disgusted that he had already been married to several wives and that nobody knew what had happened to them.

In order to get to know them better, Bluebeard took the young ladies, their mother, three or four very good friends of theirs, and some youngsters who lived in the neighborhood to one of his country houses, where they stayed eight full days. They spent time walking, hunting, fishing, dancing and eating. They did not sleep, for they kept playing tricks on one another. Actually, they had such a good time that the youngest began to believe that the beard of the owner of the house was not that blue and that he was a nice man. As soon as they returned home, they got married!

A month later, Bluebeard told his wife that, because of an important matter, he had to make a journey, which would last at least six weeks. He wanted her to have fun during his absence. She was allowed to invite her friends, go to the country, and eat a lot wherever she was. He said to her:

-“here are the keys to the two large furniture depositories, to the cupboard in which I keep the precious tableware I don’t use every day, and to the vault that contains my gold, my silver and my jewels. This is the master key, which can open all the apartments. As for this little one here, it is the key to the office that is located on the ground floor, at the end of the great gallery. You can open everything and go everywhere, except that small office. I forbid you to enter it. If you did that, I would be in a fury”.

She promised faithfully to obey him. So, he embraced her, got into his coach and left.

Her female neighbors and friends did not wait to visit her because they were impatient to see her luxurious house. Actually, they did not dare to come while her husband was there, for his blue beard frightened them.

They crossed bedrooms, offices, and changing rooms, which were all so beautiful and luxurious that they seemed to surpass one another. Then they headed for the two huge furniture depositories, where they could admire lots of beautiful tapestries, beds, sofas, dressers, pedestal tables, dining room tables, and mirrors, in which they could see themselves from

head to toe. Some of them had a glass frame, whereas others had a silver or a vermeil one; it was awesome! They overestimated and envied the happiness of their friend, who, in the meantime, did not enjoy looking at all these treasures because she could not wait to enter the ground floor office. She was so impatient that she impolitely left her friends and descended a small hidden staircase with such rapidity that she almost broke her neck twice or thrice.

She arrived at the door of the office. She stayed there for a while, pondering her husband's orders and what she would endure if she disobeyed him. She was so impatient that she indulged herself. So she grasped the little key and, trembling, opened the door of the office.

At first, she could not see anything, since all the windows were shut. A few moments later, she noticed that the floor was covered with dry blood, in which the images of several dead women hung on the walls were reflected. Those women were all the wives whom Bluebeard had married and murdered one after another. She was scared to death. She pulled the key and dropped it. She regained her composure, picked up the key, locked the door, and headed for her bedroom in order to calm down, but she could not, for she was devastated.

She noticed that the key was stained with blood. She tried twice or thrice to wipe it off, but the blood did not disappear. She washed it and even sanded it, but she could not remove the stain, for it was a magic

key. Hence, it was impossible to clean it: when the blood was removed on one side, it reappeared on the other side.

Bluebeard returned home on that very evening! He declared that he had received letters which said that they had just sealed a deal that benefited him. His wife strove hard to lead him to believe that she was glad of his speedy return.

The next morning he asked her the keys, which she gave him, but her hand was so shaky that he guessed what had happened. He said:

-“why is the key to my office not with the others”?

She answered:

-“It is clear that I left it upstairs, on my table”.

-“Make sure”, he said, “that you bring it to me presently”.

He asked her several times, and she had to bring him the key. Bluebeard looked at it and said to his wife:

-“why is it stained with blood”?

-“I don’t know”, cried the poor woman, white as a sheet.

-“You do not know”, replied Bluebeard, “but I do! You wanted to enter the small office! So, you will enter it in order to join the ladies you saw there”.

She was in tears. She threw herself at her husband's feet and begged forgiveness. It was clear that she regretted having disobeyed her husband. She was so beautiful and sorrowful that her mien could

have moved a stone to tears. Unfortunately, Bluebeard's heart was harder than stone. He said:

-"Madam, you must die now".

In tears, she said to him:

-"since I must die, give me some time to say my prayers".

-"I give you", replied Bluebeard, "five minutes and not one minute more".

When she was alone, she called to her sister and said to her:

-"Sister Anne", (for that was her name), "please, position yourself on the top of the tower and look if my brothers are not coming. They promised me that they would come today. If you see them, beckon them to hurry up".

Her sister Anne positioned herself on the top of the tower. The poor woman cried out from time to time: "Anne, sister Anne, do you see anyone coming"? Her sister Anne responded: "I see nothing but the sun, the dust and the green grass".

Meanwhile, holding a big knife in his hand, Bluebeard shouted:

-"come here immediately, or else I will go upstairs".

-"One moment more, please", said his wife, and then she whispered:

-"Anne, sister Anne, do you see anyone coming"?

And sister Anne replied:

-"I see nothing but the sun, the dust, and the green grass".

-“Come here immediately”, cried Bluebeard, “or else I will go upstairs”.

-“I am coming”, answered his wife; and then she cried:

-“Anne, sister Anne, do you see anyone coming”?

-“I see”, replied sister Anne, “a lot of dust on this side”.

- “Are they my brothers”?

-“Alas, no, my dear sister! I see a flock of sheep”.

-“Will you not come here?”, cried Bluebeard.

-“One moment more”, answered his wife, and then she cried out:

-“Anne, sister Anne, do you see anyone coming”?

-“I see”, she said, “two horsemen coming, but they are far away”.

-“Thank God!”, she cried presently, “they are my brothers; I am trying to beckon them to hurry up”.

Then Bluebeard started to yell: it was so loud that he made the whole house tremble. The poor woman, in tears and disheveled, went downstairs and threw herself at his feet.

-“It’s no use insisting”, retorted Bluebeard, “you must die”.

Then, pulling her hair and lifting up his big knife, he readied himself for the execution. The poor woman turned to look at him with her imploring eyes; she asked him to give her some time so that she might pray.

-“No, no”, he said, “ask God to have mercy on you right now”. Then, he raised his arm…

At that moment, they knocked on the door so loudly that Bluebeard stopped. The door was opened. Two horsemen entered. They drew their swords and rushed after Bluebeard. He recognized them: they were the brothers of his wife. One was a dragoon and the other a musketeer. He tried to escape, but the two brothers pursued him and caught him before he could reach the porch. They ran their swords through his body and killed him. The poor wife was almost as dead as her husband. She could hardly stand up and welcome her brothers.

Since Bluebeard had no heirs, his wife inherited his property. She gave some money to her sister Anne so that she might marry a young gentleman who loved her. She bought her two brothers commissions. Thanks to rest of the money, she could marry a good man, who made her forget the difficult period she had gone through.

**The moral of the story.**

Curiosity is very appealing, but it is also very dangerous. Every day, there are lots of examples. With all due respect to women, it is a frivolous pleasure, for it is ephemeral and costly.

**The second moral of the story.**

Reasonable, intelligent people realize that this tale is outdated. Nowadays, jealous or angry husbands are neither cruel nor demanding. Whatever the colour

of their beards, they toe the line when their wives are next to them. Consequently, it is very difficult to see who the master is.